

Emptiness into Melody by Carrera_os

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Summary:

Ten years ago Steve stepped between Billy and the Mind Flayer and Billy watched him bleed out, so he has to still be asleep, right?

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Billy's stomach drops out when he sees the man standing at the register, blood going cold because he must still be dreaming, this is just a prelude to another nightmare. Billy watched Steve Harrington die on July 4th 1985, watched him bleed out through blurry eyes as others openly wept, had held onto him until the government swarmed and he was pushed back. Billy had left the next morning, blood still under his nails and tried his damnedest to forget all about Hawkins and its horrors.

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Billy has been mostly just going through the motions of living for the last ten years. A month ago he moved closer to the coast around where he grew up with his mom before Neil decided to claim them both, after he got a promotion he did not particularly want but he had always dreamed about coming back home back to the ocean. He was hoping the scent of sea would help with the nightmares that plague him, it does not but he feels a little less startled, a little less frightened when he wakes with the scent of salt in his nose.

Billy did not linger after Starcourt, he left town right after everything went down and did not stay in touch, he did not want to be reminded of the things he did. He did not want to think about Steve stepping between him and a monster, sacrificing his own life to save him. Leaving did not make him forget though, he still wakes up in a cold sweat more often than not to the image of Steve bleeding out in his arms as the mind flyer screeches and wilts, calling out a dead boy's name.

Billy is familiarizing himself with the area, has been walking around for hours now after a particularly vivid nightmare, had scrubbed at his hands for an hour trying to get imagined blood off before deciding getting out of the house was the best course of action. He has gotten breakfast and a trim by the time he finds a little book store selling both new and used books, Billy has always liked books, been using them since he was young to escape reality.

The musty smell that greets him as he enters is like an old friend, familiar and comforting. Billy gets lost in the depths of the store for some time, checking out each section and collecting a small pile of books to bring home with him. A clerk gives him a box for his books when he has worked half way through the store and by the time he

makes it back to the front it is overflowing. Billy is feeling good, better than he has in a while as he ventures to the register, ready to head home and get lost in his books.

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Billy feels like he cannot get enough air in, he has never had a nightmare like this before, never put much thought into what Steve might look like if he had not died that night. Billy shakes, as he looks at the man standing at the counter, hair longer than Steve's had been but the volume is there, that constellation of moles on his cheek impossibly familiar. Billy shifts the box and pinches himself hard and it hurts, not dreaming, he shakes his head, shuts his eyes, trying to get the image of Steve out of his mind, sure he must just be imposing the details he has never stopped thinking about onto some stranger.

Billy blinks his eyes open again and the man looks the same, pretty pink mouth, Billy spent hours staring at, even more thinking about moving as he starts talking to the cashier. He sounds almost exactly the same, maybe a little raspier, a little more strain on his vocal cords, Billy's breath is quickening as the man nervously asks after a book on tape he ordered, has to give his name and Billy is moving before Harrington is full out of the man's mouth.

Billy dumps his box on the counter and grabs his wrist and Steve jerks, turning wide dark brown eyes on Billy, going wider as they fill with familiarity. The faintest shocked little "Billy" slips from those lips and Billy's hand tightens and he knows he is shaking harder, breath going labored, he thinks maybe he is going crazy because there is no mistaking this is Steve Harrington back from the dead.

"I thought you were dead" Those wide shocked eyes soften and Billy tugs on the wrist he has looped his fingers around, he does not care if he is seeing some sort of ghost, if he has lost his mind, he just wants Steve closer.

"Was dead for a few minutes here and there." Steve admits, the clerk looking a little more interested in the conversation as he looks between them, box of tapes on the counter waiting.

"I" Billy's words get caught in his throat, he does not know where to start, he has questions and things he has thought about saying every day since that fourth of July night because no matter how much he tried not to think about Steve after that night, he still always does.

Steve licks his lips and goes to gesture with both of his hands but Billy still has a firm grip on his wrist despite the way his hands are shaking and sweat is dampening the skin. So Steve uses one hand to indicate the little box on the table "You want to maybe go somewhere and catch up after I pay for this?" Billy just nods, afraid his voice will fail him if he tries to speak.

He does not let go of Steve, afraid he will fade away to nothingness if Billy gives up the tangible proof of his pulse under his fingers. Steve keeps giving him concerned looks as he fishes his wallet out and pays the man at the counter. "Don't you want your books?" Steve asks voice going high at the end as Billy abandons his box and drags Steve out the door as soon as he has his little plastic bag of cassettes in hand.

"Where are we going?" Steve asks, stumbling to keep up with Billy's quick pace, but not trying to make Billy stop or slow, keeping pace easily once he gets his feet under him again.

"Home" Billy gruffs out, the chill in the early winter air helping him get his breath back, Steve's pulse under his fingers warm compared to

the chill starting to set in from the wind.

"Okay." Steve shrugs a little and Billy spares him a look, sees Steve pulling his zipper up higher and he slows a little so that he does not trip Steve up again.

His apartment is only a block away, Billy ignoring the world as he drags Steve along. His neighbors included, when they get to his place and the older couple who live next door wave, Steve offers them a wave in his stead before Billy yanks him inside. The door slams shut and Billy turns and drags Steve into his chest, face tucked in against Steve's neck breath going shaky again.

"You're alive right I'm not going crazy am I? Somehow you're here alive and real and here. You feel real." Steve's arms certainly feel solid as they come up around him, voice a little shaky when he speaks face pressed into Billy's curls muffling his words.

"Yeah I'm real, I think, some days it's, it's hard and I don't think I made it out but Robin and Carol, they remind me." Steve's answer just gives Billy more questions than before and he tightens his arms around Steve and wishes he had tried harder to keep up with Max or even Carol after everything.

"I thought you were dead" Billy repeats as the tears fall, dripping wet over Steve's soft scarf, and Billy is shaking harder as Steve's arms just tighten around him holding him close as everything else fades away.

Author's Note:

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